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UNITED STATES MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND, VIETNAM
APO US FORCES 96243

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Serial No. 0287
3 March 1965

MACJ 323

SUBJECT: Lessons Learned Number 46, Recent Operations

TO: See Distribution

1. (U) Attached as Inclosure 1 is the latest "Lessons Learned" from counterinsurgency operations in the Republic of Vietnam.

2. (U) The information contained in "Lessons Learned" is primarily intended for use by US Advisors in Vietnam. Lessons may be of value for direct application, or they may simply reinforce existing tactics, techniques, or doctrine.

3. (CMHA) Attached document is classified CONFIDENTIAL to permit freedom of expression and careful analysis of operational methods and tactics of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces, to protect US advisor-counterpart relations and to deny any possible use by insurgent forces. Special handling is required under the applicable provisions of DA-DCMI(A) when released to friendly nations. Release to personnel of the Republic of Vietnam will be governed by the provisions of MACV Directive 380-4, 11 Apr 64. Sanitized versions of this information omitting dates, names of locations and participating personnel and units may be prepared for instructional purposes and/or official US Army, Navy, or Air Force publications.

4. (U) Comments, questions and requests for changes in distribution should be addressed to this headquarters, ATTN: J323.

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1. (U) GENERAL: This issue of "Lessons Learned" discusses two operations which were conducted in I Corps in February 1965. One was a success, the other a failure. There are lessons to be learned from both.

2. (CMHA) OPERATION LAMSON 152:

a. Participating Units: The 2nd Battalion, 1st Regiment with six M113 APC attached was the main tactical element. The operation was supported by a platoon of 105 howitzers, 1 armed HU-1B fire team (2 ships) and 1 O-1F aircraft. The operation was controlled by 1st Regiment, 1st Division.

b. Mission: To reestablish GVN control in a small village which had been overrun by the VC on the night of 14-15 February 1965.

c. Narrative of Action: (Refer to sketch map Inclosure 1).

(1) On the morning of 15 February a Popular Force platoon sent out to investigate the situation in Village B encountered a VC force estimated at one company in the vicinity of Village A. The platoon pulled back to the north and set up blocking positions across the sand dunes at position C and requested reinforcements.

(2) The 1st Regiment was responsive to this request and planned to attack the VC by sweeping north through the line of villages in an effort to drive the VC into the PF blocking position or force them into the open areas covered by the M113 force plus artillery and air on the east and by artillery and air on the west.

(3) At about 1400 the force moved out as planned. During the movement to contact one M113 struck a mine at position E and was lost to the

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operation. At about 1500 hours the 2d Battalion (-) had commenced their sweep to the north through the line of villages and at 1740 had made their initial contact with the VC just south of village B. Pursued aggressively by the 2d Battalion, the VC attempted to flee north, but were blocked by the Popular Forces at position C. An element of the VC force assumed the defense in prepared positions along the stream at position D while approximately 40 VC attempted to escape across the rice paddies west of position A. Ten of these were killed by the M13 forces. Meanwhile the 2d Battalion had moved two companies to the east and slightly to the rear of position D to seal off further escape. At about 1850 the remaining company assaulted the VC position from the south while the other two companies supported by fire. The VC position was quickly overrun with the bulk of the VC being killed by infantry weapons in the process.

(4) The VC lost 37 killed, including one political commissar, and four were captured. In addition, 30 individual weapons and a quantity of grenades of various types were seized. Friendly losses were 1 KIA and 3 WIA.

d. (C) Lessons Learned:

a. Timely response to the call for assistance from the Popular Forces enabled overwhelming friendly forces to be brought to bear before nightfall. Had the response been delayed the VC would have been able to follow their usual tactic of escape during the hours of darkness.

b. Skillful utilization of terrain, combined with correct employment of fire, maneuver and forces (including paramilitary) was a key factor in this success. At each point of decision the commander quickly appraised the situation and issued timely orders which assured aggressive pursuit of the enemy from the initial point of contact. This aggressiveness kept the enemy off balance and assured total victory with minimal losses to the friendly forces.

3. (CMHA) OPERATION QUYET THANG 468:

a. Participating Units: Friendly forces included the 3rd Battalion, 4th Regiment; 3d Battalion (-), 6th Regiment; and the 1st Company, 39th Ranger Battalion. One VNAF O-1 and a platoon of 105mm howitzers were in support. VNAF fighters were on-call. The operation was controlled by the 4th Regiment.

b. Mission: To search out and destroy an estimated VC battalion reported to be in position six kilometers south of Qui Son on Nui Lac San Ridge.

c. Narrative of Action: (Refer to sketch map Inclosure 2).

(1) The scheme of maneuver provided for an attack on Nui Lac San Ridge (Objective A) from the north using the Qui Son - Phu Binh Road as a

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boundary between the 3d Company, 3d Battalion, 6th Regiment on the west and the 3d Battalion (-), 4th Regiment, reinforced with the 1st Ranger Company on the east. The 2d Company, 3d Battalion, 6th Regiment was directed to occupy a blocking position south of the ridge near Viet An.

(2) All units moved out at 1215 hours and by 1400 hours the maneuver forces had reached their intermediate objectives and the 2d Company had occupied its blocking position. No contact had been made with the VC.

(3) The 3d Battalion (-) (reinf) was then ordered to continue the advance on a single axis maintaining a strong reserve. The 6th Regiment elements were to remain in place.

(4) Instead of moving on a single axis, the battalion commander divided his forces and deployed on two axes with both forces employing companies on line led by the force command element.

(5) By 1600 hours, the western element had advanced to within 300 meters of Objective A and the eastern element to within 600 meters. The units on the west came under intense fire and within the first few minutes many of the officers were KIA and the battalion commander's radio destroyed. The two companies on the east received light fire and remained in place awaiting orders.

(6) The VC attacked and closed with the western element and, without communications, the battalion commander was unable to influence the action. No artillery was fired. However, an A-1H airstrike was effected and all friendly elements were able to break contact at 1900 hours and returned to Qui Son. Friendly losses were 41 KIA, 18 WIA, 7 MIA and 39 weapons and seven radios lost. VC losses were unknown.

(7) A follow-up action the next day failed to locate any enemy.

d. Lessons Learned:

(1) Unwarranted deviation from the plan resulted in a lack of sufficient force at the point of contact.

(2) The use of companies on line led by command groups was tactically unsound and in violation of orders. The resultant loss of leadership and communications at a critical time caused confusion among the friendly units and allowed the VC to gain the initiative.

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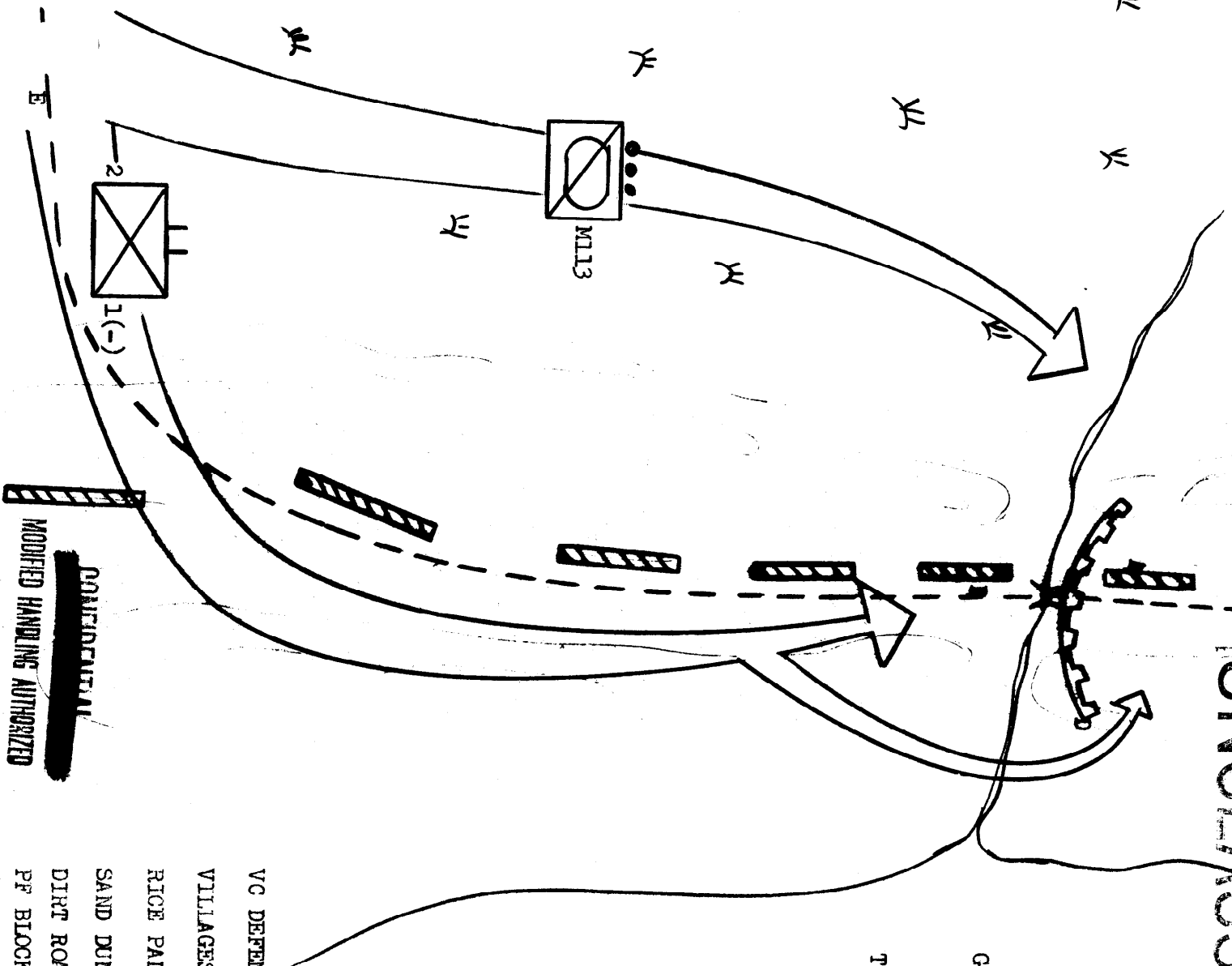
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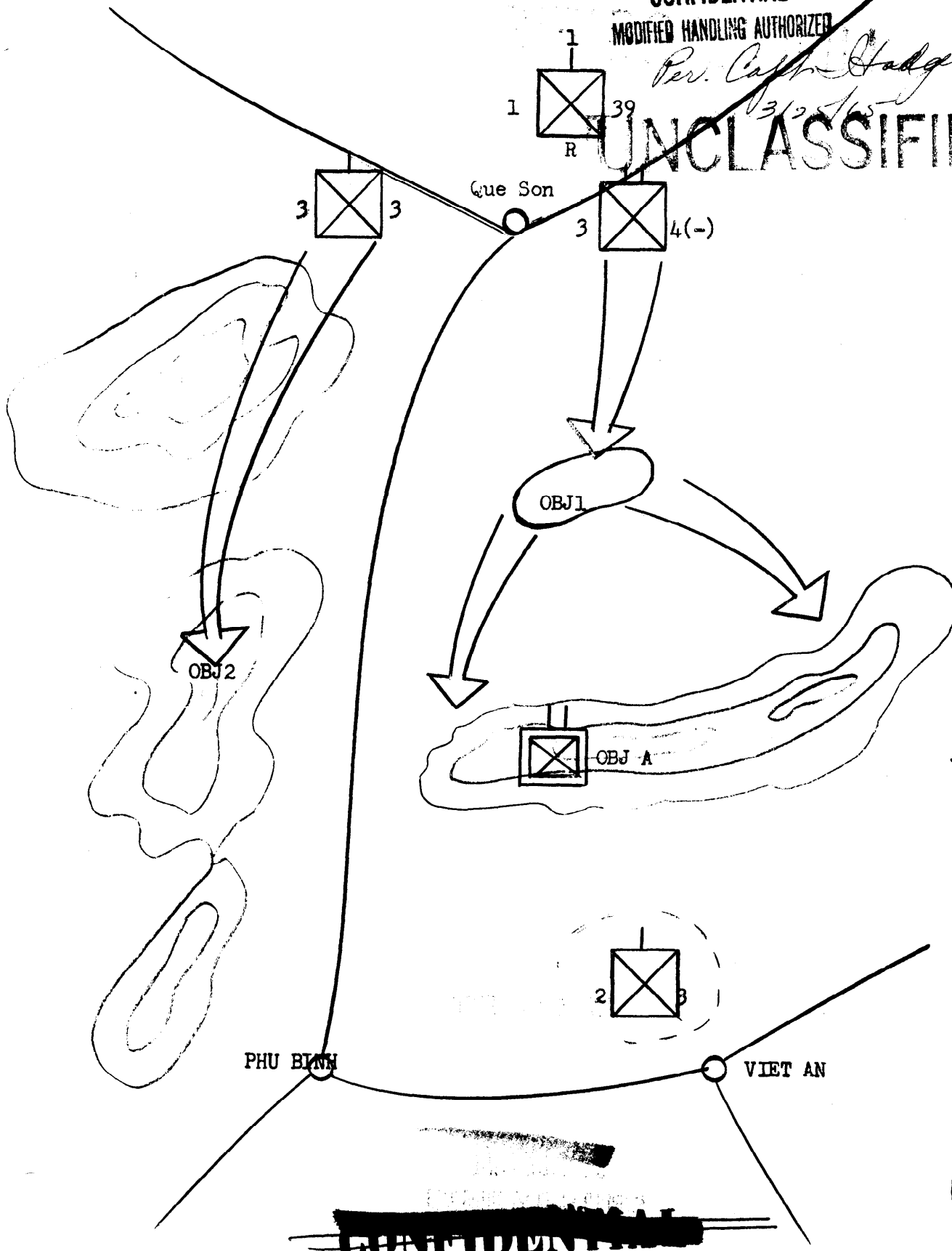
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